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SECRET

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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

SOUTH VIETNAM: The South Vietnamese appear more optimistic about the military situation. (Page 1)

EGYPT: Sadat emphasizes value of Soviet aid. (Page 2)

MALAGASY REPUBLIC: The government's harsh suppression of a strike by students will intensify opposition to President Tsiranana's regime. (Page 3)

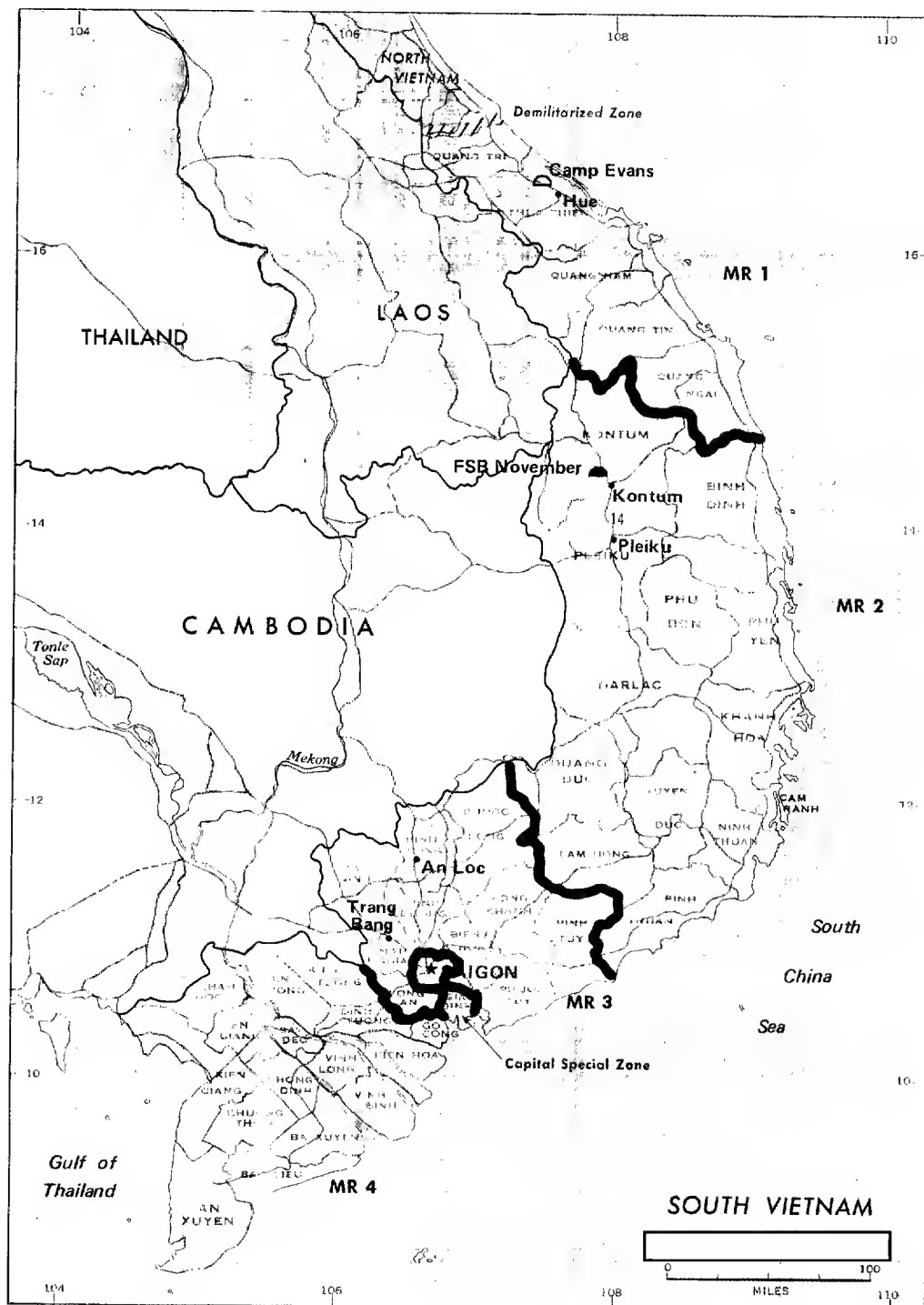
USSR: Business as usual (Page 4)

WEST GERMANY: Treaty vote (Page 4)

TURKEY: Political crisis (Page 5)

SECRET

SECRET



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25X1

SECRET

SECRET

SOUTH VIETNAM: The South Vietnamese appear more optimistic about the military situation. Most political and religious leaders are expressing strong approval of the US decision to mine North Vietnam's ports, and several An Quang Buddhist leaders have said they are confident that South Vietnamese forces can hold Hue. Some prominent South Vietnamese figures, however, have told US Embassy officers they are concerned that the Communists might accept President Nixon's cease-fire offer.

President Thieu's attempt to build broader political support for the government is still being threatened by opposition to his bid for emergency decree powers. After a heated debate, the Lower House passed Thieu's request for emergency powers on 14 May by an 81 to 49 vote. Prior to the start of the session, 28 opposition deputies staged a protest sit-in outside the Lower House building. The government is not sure it can get Senate approval of the measure this week, and a presidential aide has indicated that, if the request is voted down, Thieu will stretch his authority to the maximum under the martial law regime he instituted last week.

Nguyen Ngoc Huy, an influential politician who heads the moderate Progressive Nationalist Movement, reportedly has come out against the bill. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Huy favors giving Thieu political support, but strongly objects to the president's decision to use pressure tactics instead of openly asking for the backing of political leaders. Huy claims Thieu is continuing to isolate himself from all but a few advisers, who may not be giving him an accurate picture of the political situation.

SECRET

EGYPT: President Sadat has again emphasized that the need for Soviet support in the struggle against Israel overshadows any differences that may arise in Cairo's relationship with Moscow.

Speaking before the National Assembly on Sunday, the Egyptian leader accused the US and Israel of trying to drive a wedge between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Sadat said Washington and Tel Aviv claim that Moscow's friendship with Cairo is merely a device to gain concessions and bases in Egypt. He countered this, however, by stating that Cairo and Moscow are honest friends dealing with each other on an equal footing. On the other hand, Sadat characterized Israel's relationship with the US as that of an "agent" state. He admitted that misunderstandings had arisen between Cairo and Moscow but emphasized the indispensable nature of Soviet aid and warned that "fishing in troubled waters" would be fruitless. The Egyptian leader's remarks may have been tuned in part to the arrival in Egypt of Soviet Defense Minister Grechko the same day.

Sadat also sought to counter disapproval of his policies in recent months by a variety of critics. He said both his and Nasir's actions were intended solely to avenge the defeat of the 1967 war and to build a democratic society in Egypt. Sadat said that while he would allow public opposition to his policies, it had to be through mechanisms of a democratic government, the legislature and the Arab Socialist Union, political bodies which are generally responsive to regime control. The justification of Cairo's ties with the USSR and the defense of his other policies have been recurring themes in Sadat's recent speeches, indicating his growing sensitivity to domestic criticism.

25X1

SECRET

MALAGASY REPUBLIC: The government's harsh suppression of a three-week strike by students will intensify opposition to President Tsiranana's regime.

At least 20 persons were reportedly killed and hundreds wounded as student demonstrators clashed with security forces over the weekend. The students set fire to the city hall and the offices of the government's major newspaper, burned cars, and damaged other public and private buildings, including the Malagasy radio station. On 11 May, student strike leaders were arrested and charged with attempting to overthrow the government, and all schools in Tananarive Province were closed until further notice.

President Tsiranana, in a radio broadcast on 12 May, proclaimed a state of emergency and warned students that the killings would continue unless the strike ended. Tsiranana blamed "Communist agitators" for organizing the demonstrations.

The well-organized strike, which was begun by university and secondary students in Tananarive to protest the government's educational policies, had spread steadily throughout the country's secondary schools, gaining support from most teachers and many parents. The students were demanding widespread reforms to reduce French technical assistance and influence on the educational system and to establish educational programs more suited to the needs of Madagascar. Government officials had refused to consider seriously student grievances as long as the strike continued.

Tsiranana's survival is not seriously in doubt, but his harsh repressive measures are likely to turn student discontent into outright political opposition to his regime. The students had conducted the strike peacefully until the incidents on 12 May, and despite the government's charges, there is no evidence they intended to try to overthrow the government. Nonetheless, the strike movement was acquiring political overtones even before the killings.

15 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

SECRET

SECRET

NOTES

25X1

USSR: Top Soviet military and political leaders are still conducting business as usual. Defense Minister Grechko and the heads of the Soviet Navy and Air Force arrived in Cairo on Sunday for a four-day stay, and Moscow has announced that army chief Pavlovskiy left Sunday for a visit to France that is to last until 19 May. No unusual activity involving the civilian leadership has been reported. Soviet officials abroad continue to take a low-key approach in their comments on the Vietnam situation.

[REDACTED]

* * * *

WEST GERMANY: The opposition Christian Democrats are caucusing today and tomorrow preparatory to the Bundestag vote on the Eastern treaties on 17 May. The Christian Democrats are expected to decide to support both the draft all-party resolution and the treaties, despite last-minute doubts raised on 9 May, when the Soviets for a time seemed unwilling to agree to parts of the resolution. The resolution is a unilateral West German interpretation of the treaties which the Soviets, as the price for Christian Democratic agreement not to block ratification, are supposed to accept without challenge. Even though conservative resistance to the treaties is apparently beginning to weaken, it is doubtful that opposition leader Barzel can convince his divided party to support ratification en bloc.

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25X1
25X1

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15 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

4

SECRET

SECRET

TURKEY: President Sunay's rejection on Saturday of prime minister-designate Urguplu's proposed government has deepened the political crisis. In announcing his decision, Sunay declared that the 24-member cabinet as proposed was incompatible with the existing conditions in the country and with the military leadership memorandum of 12 March 1971 which required the formation of an "above parties" government. The top military leaders had issued the memorandum when they ousted the government headed by ex-prime minister Demirel. Sunay's public announcement also made clear that Urguplu has been dismissed. Thus, a new man must now be chosen to try to form a government. The president's unprecedented action--which had to be endorsed, if not actually dictated, by the military leaders--has further undermined the parliamentary system in Turkey, and increases the possibility that the military will directly take over the government.

25X1

15 May 72

Central Intelligence Bulletin

5

SECRET

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